

Faces of Virginia Medicaid



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**We want our members to
know we’ve got you covered!**

Karen Kimsey
Virginia Medicaid Director

Director’s Message

The Department of Medical Assistance Services is proud to serve one in six Virginians, including low-income families, children, pregnant women, people with disabilities and adults of all ages. We have invited some of our 1.6 million members to share their stories with you. This booklet contains their powerful and inspiring testimonials. I hope you will spend time getting to know these incredible men and women, and I hope you will take this opportunity to learn more about the Medicaid program.



The Virginia Medicaid program has experienced tremendous change in recent years. In 2019, Medicaid expansion opened the door to lifesaving coverage for more than 400,000 newly eligible adults. In 2020, our agency responded to COVID-19 with policies to ensure that most Medicaid members would not lose coverage during the health emergency and to protect individuals from out-of-pocket costs for health care services.

We want our members to know we’ve got you covered. And we want Virginians who are currently uninsured to know that we are here for you. You can check your eligibility at coverva.org, and you can apply for coverage by calling 1-855-242-8282. Medicaid accepts applications year round, so please take this important step today.

A handwritten signature of Karen Kimsey in blue ink. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style, with the first name 'Karen' and last name 'Kimsey' clearly legible.



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**I have more peace of mind,
more stability and better health**

Angela
Virginia Medicaid Member

Angela

Angela does not let her medical conditions and disabilities stop her from living a happy and healthy life. She credits the teamwork of her Optima Health care coordinator, transitional care coordinator, and housing specialist for giving her new independence and better health by transitioning her out of a long-term nursing care facility into her own apartment.

A back surgery complication left Angela with paraplegia. She is also legally blind and has diabetes, hypertension, and a Stage IV tunneling wound.

Even though she had been living in a nursing facility, she had to be admitted to a hospital every few months for wound infections, sepsis or other health issues. She ran out of medications and missed her hemodialysis appointments.

Since moving to her new apartment, Angela said she has “more peace of mind, more stability, better health, and I haven’t been sick for any reason at all since I’ve been home.” She has a personal care attendant who cooks healthy meals for her, which she said contributed to her losing 46 pounds. Angela said she no longer runs out of clean clothes because her aide does her laundry every day.

Now that she can schedule her own transportation, she never misses any medical appointments. Regular visits from a home health care nurse and appointments with a wound-care specialist have decreased the size of her tunneling wound, while her aide helps reposition her to prevent further skin breakdown.

Angela also said she feels a certain amount of freedom in her own home. “My social life is better, just being out in the community, and not being confined, no curfews like at the nursing facility.” She said she attends church every Sunday as well as Bible study, and she can have visitors anytime she wants now.

“I can take care of myself, and have more peace of mind, and I am much happier and healthier now than I have been over the last 10 years when my health declined.”

Daryl

Daryl has been diagnosed with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and Major Depressive Disorder, and he has recently celebrated his one-year anniversary of sobriety. In the past, he discussed how he has been in and out of programs but always had the problem of staying on a straight, positive path, “because I didn’t have the support [of care coordination], but this time, I was receptive.”

Daryl is actively engaged in case management services, and meets with his peer support specialists and employment specialist with Aetna as he continues to strive and take the steps to continue to improve his overall well-being. With all the positive support, he is inspired to help others as well and is now studying to obtain his peer support specialist certification.



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Things started to fall into place...
the wheels started turning

Daryl
Virginia Medicaid Member



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**These doctors have saved
my life twice**

Karen
Virginia Medicaid Member

Karen

Karen was among the first Virginia adults to obtain health coverage through Medicaid expansion on January 1, 2019. Before that date, she had no coverage for most of her health needs, which included diabetes, high blood pressure, major depressive disorder, substance use disorder and a recent diagnosis for thyroid condition.

In the past, she had to be admitted to the hospital every six to eight months and could not continue to work as a special education teacher. Her family's only income is from her husband's disability benefits. Before her coverage began, Karen often went without some of the 15 medications she takes. She now has coverage for her prescriptions, and she has been able to obtain a new glucose monitoring system. Karen also has a care coordinator through the Commonwealth Coordinated Care Plus program.

“All of that has been phenomenal in terms of quality of life,” she said. “It has changed my life significantly. I just feel there is a breath of air that we can take now that my prescriptions are covered.”

Karen faced new health challenges in 2019, and her coverage enabled her to receive care from the specialists she needed.

“Long story short, none of this would be at all possible without the insurance coverage,” she said. “Nothing has been denied. These doctors have saved my life twice.”

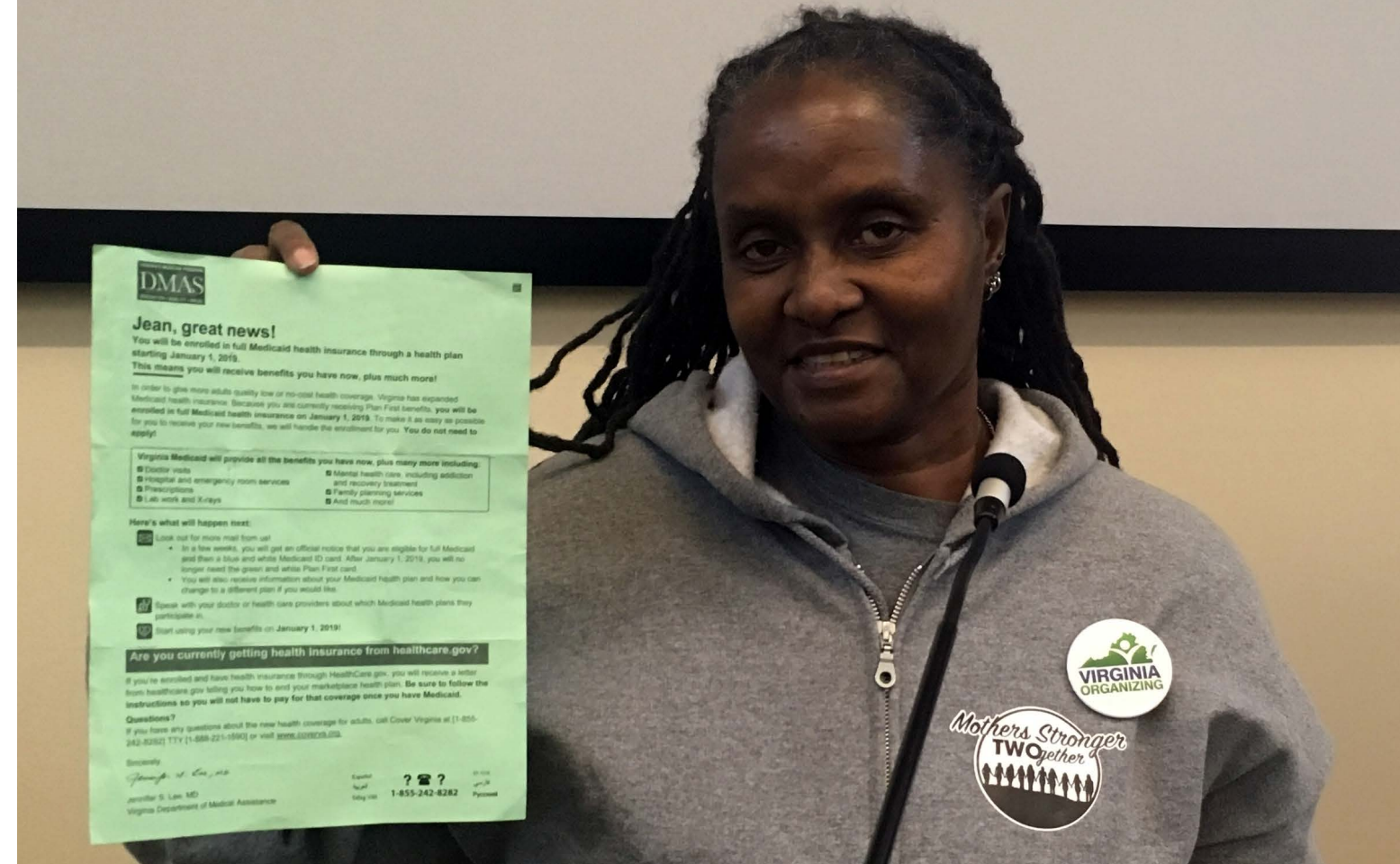
Jean

Jean lives in Danville and regularly shares her powerful testimony about how health coverage has benefited her life. Jean had to take early retirement in July 2017 because cataracts made it impossible for her to drive at night, and she worked a second-shift job. She got her notice that she was approved for Medicaid in December 2018.

“I read it, and I danced like [King] David danced because I’m going to be able to see again, and I’m going to be able to drive at night,” she said. “It was the happiest day of my most recent life. Health insurance is important because I’ve found being without it really is a matter of life and death.”

Jean is a member of Virginia Organizing, which worked hard to help win passage of Medicaid expansion and continues to spread the word through outreach projects in communities across the Commonwealth.

“Medicaid expansion gave me hope because now I’m learning how to take care of myself so I can have a long and healthier life to share with my children, grandchildren and my great grandchildren,” Jean said. “Everyone needs health insurance, regardless of our ability to pay, because every life is important.”



“ Medicaid Expansion gave me hope

Jean
Virginia Medicaid Member

Greg

While a resident at The Healing Place, operated by CARITAS, Greg obtained health coverage for the first time since he was a child. His coverage was initially through Virginia Commonwealth University Health's Virginia Coordinated Care program, and he became eligible for Medicaid in January 2019.

At The Healing Place, Greg was receiving the services he needed for his addiction to heroin, and his Medicaid coverage also gave him access to vision services that were critical to achieving his job goals.

"I got glasses, which I wear every day because I'm blind as a bat," he said. "Without glasses, I was making mistakes. Ever since I got my glasses, I've been able to do my work better. I just got a promotion thanks to my glasses as well as hard work."

Greg now works at CARITAS and was promoted from peer mentor to peer mentor supervisor. He is enrolled in a peer recovery specialist course and plans to attend college to become a substance use counselor.

"I've been through addiction, and I'm always going to struggle with it," he said, "and the best people to help those struggling with addiction are those who have been through it themselves."

The Healing Place and his Medicaid coverage have had a tremendous impact on Greg's life.

"I wouldn't have dreamed of this a year and a half ago," he said.



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I wouldn't have dreamed of this

Greg
Virginia Medicaid Member



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Medicaid has been a godsend

Sarah
Virginia Medicaid Member

Sarah

Sarah is a dedicated single mom to two young adults, and a lifelong Virginian. She grew up in Franklin County, and has lived and worked in Henry County for the past 15 years.

Sarah's job as a professional services coordinator at Lowe's has provided her with health insurance for the last 15 years. When she was diagnosed with breast cancer a year ago, she discovered that the plan's high deductible (\$1,500) and out-of-pocket maximum (\$6,000) were beyond her reach when she needed treatment.

Due to the decrease in her income from taking time off from work for her medical needs, Sarah sought charity care through Carilion Clinic to help with her treatment expenses. She was surprised when Carilion referred her to an outreach worker with the Virginia Health Care Foundation for assistance with an application for Virginia's new Medicaid health insurance. Sarah had no idea that she could qualify as an adult, with the new Medicaid health insurance as her secondary payer.

Medicaid "has been a godsend," Sarah said. The new adult coverage pays for her co-pays and deductibles and for any services she needs that her insurance from Lowe's does not cover.

By the time Sarah became aware she qualified for Medicaid, she had already undergone a year of chemotherapy, radiation and surgery. Now, with Medicaid and her Lowe's coverage, Sarah is fully covered for the ongoing medications and appointments she will need. Since the type of cancer Sarah has can have a high rate of recurrence, she will have quarterly appointments with her radiation oncologist and her surgeon for the remainder of 2020.

Instead of worrying about high costs, Sarah can focus on her ongoing treatment, and on encouraging her young adult children to pursue their dreams. She enjoys shopping and going to movies with her kids, and running to clear her mind.



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We are ordinary people who are working to make Medicaid better

James
Medicaid Member Advisory Committee Member

James

James has two important motivations for joining the Medicaid Member Advisory Committee.

“I am a parent of a son with special needs and the son-in-law of a person with physical disabilities,” he said.

James’s son was diagnosed with autism at age 2 and with schizoaffective disorder at age 13. Both his son, now 22, and mother-in-law receive Medicaid waiver services. James learned to navigate Medicaid through his experiences with the program in both Maryland and now Virginia, which have different processes and procedures.

“I learned to ask a lot of questions,” he said.

James was one of the original members of the advisory group that recommends improvements to the Medicaid program.

“I got tired of being on the sidelines,” he said. “I want to be part of the solution, to be a voice for those who don’t have one. This is a work in progress. We are ordinary people who are working to make Medicaid better and clearer. People should have more access to health care and easier access to information. We find simple, better ways to assist others and make the process easier. I feel what we’re doing is making an impact.”



About Virginia's Medicaid Member Advisory Committee

Virginia is one of only two states to create a Medicaid Member Advisory Committee made up exclusively of members and their authorized representatives.

Launched in April 2019, the group meets quarterly to provide the Medicaid Director with valuable feedback and recommendations on the agency's programs, policies, services and communications. The members of the committee represent all regions of the state and a cross-section of Medicaid programs. Through their participation, they are helping to make Medicaid more accessible and effective in serving our larger membership.

If you would like to learn more about becoming a member of the committee, visit our website at <https://www.dmas.virginia.gov/#!/memberAdvisory>.

